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## To Sleep or Not to Sleep

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# Over the Counter

Rodney G. Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP  
Harding University College of Pharmacy



## To Sleep Or Not To Sleep?

By Shunika Bryant, 2016 Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate and  
Rodney Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP

SCRIPT  
YOUR  
FUTURE

**Sleep-related problems** can cause injury, disability, and affect the way you handle family and work activities. Insufficient sleep is linked to chronic diseases and conditions, including diabetes, obesity, and depression. Understanding how lack of sleep affects your health can keep you safe and allow you to make healthier decisions. This article shares information about sleep disorders and offers tips for improving the quality of your sleep.

### SLEEP DISORDERS

**Insomnia** is the inability to begin or remain sleep. A person who wakes up during early morning hours and is unable to go back to sleep may have insomnia. Lack of sleep may cause daytime sleepiness which can impair your ability to complete daily tasks. Your health care provider must rule out other causes, such as side effects of current medications, stress, depression, or other sleep disorders before a diagnosis of insomnia is made. Insomnia may be treated with sedative-hypnotic or antidepressants along with behavioral changes that promote regular sleep.

**Narcolepsy** involves excessive sleepiness combined with sudden muscle weakness brought on by strong emotion or surprise. Episodes of narcolepsy, or "sleep attacks" may occur during normal activities, including walking, talking, or driving. Narcolepsy may be treated with stimulant medications along with behavioral changes, such as scheduled naps.

**Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)** involves an unpleasant feeling of aches and pain throughout the legs. Problems within the sensors of the brain are believed to contribute to RLS which makes it difficult to fall asleep. The sensation of pain is often relieved by continuous movement of the legs. Medications that promote sleep and correct brain sensory issues are used to treat RLS.

You should expect more quality sleep when practicing good sleep hygiene, but if you still have trouble sleeping or believe that your sleep is affecting your daily functions, please contact your healthcare provider.

### SLEEP HYGIENE

The promotion of regular sleep is known as sleep hygiene. Individual sleep needs vary; however, it is recommended that all adults get at least 7-9 hours of sleep each day while younger age groups need more. The following tips are recommended for good sleep hygiene:

- Go to bed the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning, even on weekends.
- Increase early morning physical activity to improve restful sleep.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.
- Make sure the bedroom is quiet and dark – you can prepare for bed with a warm bath or shower, aromatherapy, or soothing music.
- Make sure pillows and bed are comfortable and used only for sleeping and not for other activities, such as working on a laptop or watching TV.

### National Sleep Foundation Sleepiness Test

1. In the past 2 weeks, have you unintentionally fallen asleep during the day? Y = 1, N = 0
2. Have you unintentionally fallen asleep in a public place within the past 2 weeks? Y = 1, N = 0
3. Have you nodded off or fallen asleep while driving in the past 2 weeks? Y = 1, N = 0
4. During most days of the past 2 weeks, did you sleep enough to feel your best the next day? Y = 0, N = 1
5. Have friends, family, or coworkers told you that you look sleepy in the past 2 weeks? Y = 1, N = 2
6. Have you felt so sleepy that you required a nap during the past 2 weeks? Y = 1, N = 2

### Total Score

0-2 You Are Alert  
3-4 You Are Sleepy  
5-6 You Are Very Sleepy



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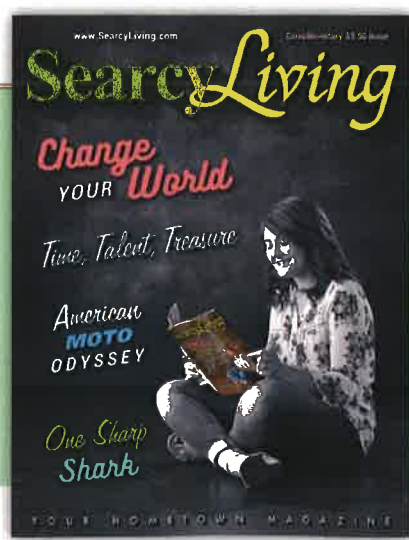
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"We cannot do **everything** at once, but we can do **something** at once."  
~ Calvin Coolidge

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